BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Population

- **British Columbia's population was estimated at 3.95 million on January 1, up from 3.89 million twelve months earlier.** The province's annual population growth rate (+1.7%) was the lowest it has been since 1987, but it remained well above the national average (+1.0%), and second only to that in Alberta, where the population grew 2.2%, to 2.87 million. In the rest of Canada, three regions—Newfoundland (-1.5%), Yukon (-0.3%) and PEI (-0.1%)—saw their population drop. New Brunswick's population was unchanged from a year earlier. Population increases in other regions ranged from 0.2% in Nova Scotia and Manitoba to 1.4% in Ontario.
  Source: Statistics Canada

- **During the fourth quarter of 1997, BC gained 7,814 people as a result of net migration from all sources.** This was 43% less than in same period of 1996. The decline was mainly due to lower migration from the rest of Canada. In the last three months of 1997, the province gained 632 people as a result of net interprovincial migration, 83% less than in 1996. The main reason for the decline was that Alberta continued to draw people away from BC. The province's net loss to Alberta in the fourth quarter of last year was 2,027 people. Saskatchewan (22) was also a net gainer in terms of interprovincial flows from BC, but other regions continued to lose more people to BC than they gained from it. After Ontario (1,613), Atlantic Canada (459) and Quebec (456) were the major contributors.

  BC had a net gain of 7,182 people as a result of international migration to the province. Net international migration was also considerably lower (-28%) than in the fourth quarter of 1996. *Source: BC STATS*

- **Migration to British Columbia from other provinces and countries is expected to continue to slow during 1998.** Total net migration is forecast to decrease 14% to 40,500 people this year. The province had gained 47,300 new residents as a result of net migration during 1997. Interprovincial migration is expected to continue to peter off, falling to 3,000 from 7,094 last year. The 1998 forecast of net international migration to BC is 37,500 people, compared to 40,202 last year. *Source: BC STATS*

Labour income

- **Wages, salaries and benefits of BC workers increased 0.5% (seasonally adjusted) between December and January.** PEI (+1.5%), BC, and Ontario (also at +0.5%) recorded the strongest increases. Growth in these provinces was offset by a 1.3% decline in Quebec and a 0.9% drop in New Brunswick, areas which were hard hit by January's ice storm. Labour income declined in 6 of the 12 regions, and as a result, the Canadian average for January was unchanged from the previous month.
  Source: Statistics Canada

Bankruptcies

- **In January, there were 486 consumer bankruptcies in British Columbia.** This was 20% less than in the same month of 1997. Consumer bankruptcies were down in all provinces, decreasing 21% overall. *Source: Industry Canada*

- **The number of business bankruptcies in the province fell 22% to 64 in January.** The decline was part of a nationwide trend. Canadian business bankruptcies were down 20% from January 1997. *Source: Industry Canada*

Report **Picking up the slack**

Did you know...?
Canadians spent 22.7 billion minutes talking long-distance during 1997. That's an average of 12.5 hours per person.

Cellular telephones

- **Since they were first introduced in 1985, cellular telephones have become increasingly popular.** In 1987, there were 98,364 cellular telephone subscribers and 13.4 million standard telephone access lines in Canada. This translates into one cell phone subscriber for every 137 network access lines in the country. (Most access lines serve only one subscriber, but some are set up to serve more than one party.)

  Between 1987 and 1996, the number of cell phone users increased at an average annual rate of 48%, growing to 3.4 million. During the same period, the number of network access lines in service was expanded to 18.1 million. This translates into one cell phone user for every five network lines. The cellular phone industry employed 7,075 Canadians in 1996, and earned revenues of $2.4 billion. *Source: Statistics Canada*

  BC Tel Mobility had 407,232 cellular phone customers in 1997, up from 300,507 in the previous year, giving the company one cell phone customer for every six access lines in the province. There were 2.5 million customer access lines in service in the province last year.
  Source: BC Telecom Inc. Annual Report 1997

Income Support

- **The number of income support beneficiaries in the province rose 2.5% (+7,240 people) to 300,555 between December and January.** Single men (+2,880) and two-parent families (+2,450) accounted for nearly three-quarters of the increase. In January, 7.6% of British Columbians were receiving some form of income support. This compares to 7.4% in December, and 8.4% in January 1997.
  Source: Ministry of Human Resources administrative data

The Nation

- **The net worth of Canadians increased 3.6% to $2.7 trillion, or $87,100 per capita, during 1997.** The net worth of Canadians is equal to our national wealth (the value of land, structures and other tangible assets such as vehicles and machinery) less our net indebtedness to foreigners. Last year, the national wealth increased 3.5% to $3.0 trillion, while our net indebtedness to foreigners rose 2.5% to $339 billion. The ratio of net foreign debt to national wealth declined from 11.5% in 1996 to 11.3% last year.

  About half (49%) of the national wealth is owned by individuals. Household net worth increased 4.5% during 1997 as a result of the recovery in the housing market and in consumer demand. However, total consumer debt and mortgages soared to a record high 100.4% of after-tax income, leaving the debt to net worth ratio for consumers virtually unchanged at 20%.
  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Canada's economy contracted in January, with GDP declining 0.7% (seasonally adjusted) after posting a 1.1% increase in December.** About a third of the decline was attributed to the ice storm, as utilities distribution systems were crippled, and some manufacturing companies were forced into temporary shutdowns due to the electricity blackout. GDP in the utilities sector declined 11.2%, and the manufacturing (-0.9%), retailing (-1.6%), wholesaling (-0.9%) and transportation and storage (-2.4%) industries also suffered from reduced activity. This negative impact was to some extent offset by increased construction activity (+4.2%), as considerable work was needed to make emergency repairs to the grid. Additional repairs, updating and rebuilding will likely continue to boost construction activity in parts of the country hardest hit by the storm.

  Other factors contributing to the drop in GDP last January include scheduled downtime in the motor vehicle manufacturing sector, a 1.2% drop in the logging and forestry industry, and a 0.7% decline in the output of the finance and insurance sector. Overall, GDP in the goods sector was down 1.4% while the output of service industries fell 0.3%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

Infoline Report:

April 3, 1998

Export Emphasis Shifts to Manufactured Goods As Resource Commodities Falter

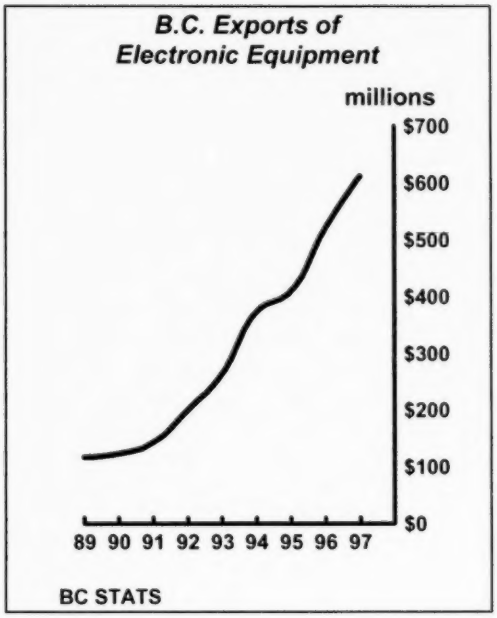
Originally published in December 1997 issue of *Exports*. An annual subscription is $60 + GST

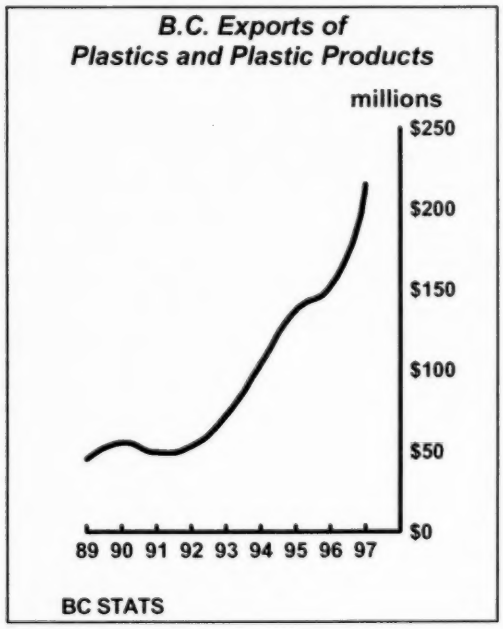
Exports of British Columbia natural resource commodities began to decline in late 1997, with the onset of the Asian economic crisis. Fortunately, as this was happening the province's exporters were shipping record high values of manufactured goods.

An expanding range of British Columbia manufactured products has become available for export in the 1990s as trade liberalisation in North America and world wide has simultaneously imposed trading imperatives, and presented new opportunities. Companies that were already producing these products for local markets have been obliged to become exporters. In other cases, new companies have been created to manufacture products aimed at world markets. The addition of their products to the provincial export mix has considerably lessened British Columbia's dependence on natural resource industries for its economic growth.

Among the fastest growing exports during the 1990s have been electrical and electronic machinery. Exports in this category increased 398 per cent from $123 million in 1990, to $611 million in 1997. Most are destined for the United States ($400 million), but 1997 exports also included significant shipments to Japan ($42 million) and to Europe ($31 million). Since 1990, exports of electronic goods have grown fastest to overseas markets.

Electronic products are part of the broader machinery and equipment export category, which has expanded from 6 per cent of total provincial exports in 1990 to 10 per cent in 1997. Machinery and equipment exports have now become more valuable than shipments of coal, metal and metal ores, fish products, paper, or any solid wood product other than lumber.





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Plastic products are another export category that occupies a rapidly expanding portion of the province's export base. Exports of plastic products climbed 291 per cent between 1990 and 1997, from $55 million, to $215 million. Most (85 per cent) was shipped to the United States. Other export destinations included a widely diversified market of developed and developing countries.

A growing immigrant business community in greater Vancouver has helped support a 315 per cent growth in apparel product exports from $44 million in 1990, to $182 million in 1997. Almost all (93 per cent) went to the United States market, although a significant $9 million was shipped to Japan.

In general, the most consistent export growth of the 1990s has been for products with no direct link to natural resource production. However, rapid and consistent export growth has also been reported for some value added manufactured products of the forestry industries. Value added forestry exports are particularly cherished by the province's economic planners because they are seen as a means of creating new jobs that can be located in rural resource communities that have suffered from closures or downsizing of sawmills and pulp mills.

A composite of the most important value added wood products registered 184 per cent export growth between 1990 and 1997, from $291 million to $827 million. This was considerably faster than the 106 per cent growth reported for semi-processed lumber exports in that period.

Most value added wood exports ($616 million) went to the United States. However, shipments to the Japanese market ($172 million) were also important, and growing faster. While value added wood exports to the United States rose 159 per cent between 1990 and 1997, those to Japan leapt 321 per cent.

Similarly in the pulp and paper industry, export growth was generally stronger for products containing greater value added content. Shipments of non-newsprint paper grew 136 per cent between 1990 and 1997. Contrasting with this, exports of pulp grew just 0.5 per cent, and newsprint exports (containing less value added content than other papers) actually shrank in value by 23 per cent.

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Infoline

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fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

also on the Internet at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	3,950.7	1.7
Canada	30,425.3	1.0
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT		% change on
(BC - at market prices - $ millions)	1996	one year ago
Current Dollars	103,631	1.7
Constant (1986) Dollars	74,001	1.0
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Jan	2,740	-7.3
Merchandise Exports (raw) Jan	1,858	-18.1
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Jan	2,791	-0.7
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Feb '98	one year ago
BC	109.5	-0.1
Canada	108.3	1.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Feb '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,023	1.1
Employed - BC	1,827	-0.1
Unemployed - BC	197	13.8
		Feb '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	9.7	8.6
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.6	9.7
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Apr 1/98	Apr 2/97
Prime Business Rate	6.50	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.40	5.55
- 5 year	6.85	7.65
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Apr 1/98	Apr 2/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4173	1.3875
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.7056	0.7207
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Jan '98	one year ago
BC	612.78	0.4
Canada	604.17	1.6

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Just out . . .

BC Economic Accounts 1987-1996

This detailed accounting of economic activity in the province is an essential resource for anyone wanting to develop an understanding of the structure of the economy. It is also a firm starting point for those seeking to model or project economic scenarios. The introductory notes for the publication provide an accessible overview and interpretation of trends in BC's economy during the last two decades. These notes are now found on our Internet site at:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

Business/Economics

The 170 page paper publication includes the write-up and tables for the years 1987-1996. It may be purchased for $20 plus GST.

The diskette version includes only the data tables but covers the entire period from 1961 to 1996 and may be purchased for $75 plus GST.

If you wish to know more about the publication or to order a copy, please contact Kris Ovens at

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- BC Economic Accounts, 1987-1996
- Migration Highlights, Fourth Quarter 1997
- Exports, January 1998

Next week

- No subscription releases

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